

UN Human Rights Council 50: Universal Periodic Review adoption – Iceland

World news story

UK delivers statement during the Universal Periodic Review adoption for Iceland



Thank you, Mr President.

The United Kingdom welcomes the engagement of Iceland with the Universal Periodic Review process and its commitment to promoting and protecting human rights, both at home and around the world.

We are pleased by Iceland's acceptance of our recommendation to build upon the 2021 Human Slavery act by increasing training for police, prosecutors and judges on how to investigate and prosecute modern slavery, and sharing its experiences internationally.

We also welcome Iceland's decision to examine the introduction of a criminal law provision that expressly considers racist motivation of an offence as an aggravating circumstance. We recommend that this examination is positively and swiftly concluded and focus is placed on its implementation.

We would encourage Iceland to submit an optional mid-term report on progress in implementing all the recommendations which have been accepted.

We would reiterate our thanks for Iceland's open and constructive approach to the human rights challenges raised at its periodic review.

Thank you.

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[First ever Patient Safety Commissioner appointed](#)

- The independent Commissioner will act as a champion for patients and lead a drive to improve the safety of medicines and medical devices
- Dr Hughes will improve how the healthcare system listens to patients, the government and the NHS to put patients first

The Health and Social Care Secretary Steve Barclay has today appointed Dr Henrietta Hughes OBE as the first ever Patient Safety Commissioner for England.

Adding to and enhancing existing work to improve the safety of medicines and medical devices, the appointment of a Commissioner is in response to the recommendations from Baroness Cumberlege's review into patient safety, published in 2020.

Dr Hughes will be an independent point of contact for patients, giving a voice to their concerns to make sure they are heard. She will help the NHS and government better understand what they can do to put patients first, promote the safety of patients, and the importance of the views of patients and other members of the public.

Bringing with her a wealth of experience in patient care as the National Guardian for the NHS, where she encouraged staff to speak up and supported whistle-blowers, Dr Hughes will be a champion for patients. She will continue to practice as a GP and chair of Childhood First, a charity that promotes and furthers the care, treatment and rehabilitation of children and adolescents.

Health and Social Care Secretary Steve Barclay said:

It is essential that we put patient safety first and continue to listen to and champion patients' voices.

Dr Henrietta Hughes brings a wealth of experience with her as the

first ever Patient Safety Commissioner to improve the safety of medicines and medical devices and her work will help support NHS staff as we work hard to beat the Covid backlogs.

Patient Safety Commissioner Henrietta Hughes said:

I am humbled and honoured to be appointed as the first Patient Safety Commissioner. This vital role, recommended in First Do No Harm, will make a difference to the safety of patients in relation to medicines and medical devices.

Patients' voices need to be at the heart of the design and delivery of healthcare. I would like to pay tribute to the incredible courage, persistence and compassion of all those who gave evidence to the report, their families and everyone who continues to campaign tirelessly for safer treatments.

I will work collaboratively with patients, the healthcare system and others so that all patients receive the information they need, all patients' voices are heard and the system responds quickly to keep people safe.

The First Do No Harm report, led by Baroness Cumberlege and published in 2020 explored issues relating to the use of Primodos, sodium valproate and pelvic mesh, and was commissioned because women did not feel listened to or their concerns acknowledged.

It highlighted the need to better protect and listen to patients and recommended the creation of an independent Patient Safety Commissioner. In July 2021, the government published its formal response to the recommendations set out in this report including a commitment to appoint a Patient Safety Commissioner with a remit covering medicines and medical devices.

The government continues to take action to improve patient safety. A statutory duty of candour has been implemented that requires Trusts to inform patients if their safety has been compromised, legal protections for whistle-blowers have been put in place, and a NHS Patient Safety Strategy was published in 2019 to create a safety, learning culture across the NHS. The Health and Care Act 2022 also established the Health Services Safety Investigations Body to investigate patient safety incidents in England.

This appointment was made following an open competition, in line with the Governance Code for Public Appointments, and following a pre-appointment scrutiny hearing with the Health and Social Care Committee.

Designs framework call for views

The designs framework enables rights holders to protect designs and enforce their rights. The [call for views](#) sought views and evidence on opportunities to improve the designs framework in the UK. This will help the government ensure the UK's designs framework works for the designers, businesses and consumers that use it.

Responses to the call for views were received on three broad areas – new opportunities, future technologies, and better regulation. The [government response](#) provides a summary of the responses received. It sets out issues for further consideration, including areas for future consultation. These issues include:

- how to simplify the designs regime, in particular for [unregistered designs](#)
- how to improve guidance for designers, including those who do not normally engage with government directly
- options around search and examination
- the relationship between design and copyright law, and if there is a need for reform or guidance
- concerns about disclosure requirements for supplementary unregistered designs, including uncertainty in relation to simultaneous disclosure
- if the current format requirements for how designs are represented should be updated
- how to ensure the designs system is flexible enough to support developments in technology
- options for a possible deferment provision
- measures that could be introduced to make enforcement easier for all rights owners
- evidence to support views on the extension of criminal sanctions for unregistered design infringement

The UK has a vibrant design industry. A designs framework that supports designers, and encourages overseas investment, will help give the UK a competitive edge. Following the UK's departure from the European Union (EU), we have new flexibilities to define the domestic designs regime. As the UK negotiates trade deals with international partners, a modern and flexible designs framework will help make the most of these new opportunities and help our design industry flourish.

The Intellectual Property Office's Chief Executive, Tim Moss, said:

In a competitive global marketplace, great design helps UK products stand out, demonstrate quality and reach new customers all over the world.

The designs framework is a crucial element of our IP system.

Through this review, we want to ensure it remains fit to embrace the challenges of an increasingly digital future, helping to unleash the potential of the UK's creative and innovative industries.

Matthew Ridley, Chair of Chartered Institute of Patent Attorneys' Designs and Copyright Committee, said:

We have appreciated the opportunity to respond to the call for views, and look forward to providing further input at consultation.

We are pleased that the government response acknowledges the benefits of the existing speed and value of the UK designs registration system.

Further consultation will provide further opportunity to identify improvements to the UK design framework – particularly in the areas of simplifying the unregistered design and copyright systems, considering the searching and examination of registered designs and implementing a harmonised deferment provision under UK law. We look forward to further engagement with government on these important areas.

Cat Drew, Chief Design Officer at the Design Council said:

The design economy is a significant and growing contributor to economic growth. Our departure from the EU, the disruption of the Covid pandemic and the climate emergency are seeing us reconfigure and re-establish global trade routes. An IP framework that supports all designers, and protects sustainable and equitable innovation will help ensure the design economy remains a major driver of exports.

The climate emergency requires us to redesign almost every aspect of our lives. Global collaboration is crucial. We need an IP system that allows ideas to be shared and spread, protecting and rewarding imagination and creativity.

We welcome the IPO's recognition that these are complex issues, and look forward to working with them on further consultation to get this challenge right.

Notes to editors:

- the Intellectual Property Office (IPO) is the government agency responsible for ensuring the designs framework supports rights holders to protect designs and enforce their rights
 - the call for views ran for 8 weeks between January and March 2022 and received 57 responses. The IPO also held a number of round-table events
 - in addition to the call for views, the IPO published a survey aimed at people with an interest in designs and how they are protected, but who do not consider themselves experts on IP. The survey received 288 responses
 - responses to the call for views were received from designers (5), design consultants (2), academics (2), legal firms and professionals (17), legal trade bodies and professional bodies (7), other trade bodies (10), small and medium enterprises (SMEs) (9), large enterprises (4) and other (1)
 - responses to the designs survey came predominantly from lone designers (58%) and small businesses employing fewer than 10 people (22%). This provides additional insight into how these groups use design protection in the UK
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[Environment Agency report sets out urgent need to work with nature](#)

An [Environment Agency report](#) that lays bare the scale of change needed to halt England's biodiversity and climate crisis has been published today.

It sets out how significant changes will be needed to how land is used in England, with the need for significant landscape scale interventions and the use of nature-based solutions to help wildlife recover, and for humans to mitigate and adapt to the effects of climate change.

The '[Working with Nature](#)' report compiled by Environment Agency scientists sets out the global challenges facing the basics for life on Earth – clean water, climate regulation and food. It describes the potential loss of complex natural ecosystems that provide such essentials as an existential risk to human survival.

Referencing Rachel Carson's 1962 book *Silent Spring*, considered by many to be the most important piece of environmental writing of the 20th century, Environment Agency chief executive [Sir James Bevan today spoke](#) about the 'silent spring' that awaits humanity unless action is taken by businesses, government and individuals to prevent further damage and rebuild the natural environment.

The report was unveiled at event today hosted by the Green Alliance, ahead of

the COP15 Biodiversity Conference taking place later this year.

Internationally, the G7 leaders have committed to the global mission to halt and reverse biodiversity loss by 2030. The COP 15 meeting of the UN Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) in 2022 will review the progress towards previously agreed Biodiversity targets.

Sir James Bevan, Environment Agency Chief Executive, said:

The biodiversity crisis joins the climate crisis as an existential risk to our survival, but as this report sets out the solution is not to retreat but to work together to build a nature-positive response.

Nature provides the basics for life – clean water, clean air and food. With major pressures on land use across England, nature-based solutions must be a major part in our response to protect these essentials whilst rebuilding our natural world.

England is one of the most nature-depleted countries in the world due to its long history of industrialisation and land use changes over millennia. Large areas of habitats have been lost with 99.7% of fens, 97% of species-rich grasslands, 80% of lowland heathlands, up to 70% of ancient woodlands and up to 85% of saltmarshes destroyed or degraded.

The impacts on species have also been severe, with a quarter of mammals in England and almost a fifth of UK plants threatened with extinction.

Nature in England has also been impacted by pressures on land use. The report sets out the impact of the last 50 years of agricultural production and points to the likelihood of a need of further intensification and increased yields from agricultural land. It also charts the impacts of urbanisation, forestry and the need for large areas of land for climate change mitigation.

To address the major declines in biodiversity that will only be accelerated by a changing climate, the report sets out a need for more land to be dedicated to nature conservation to act as refuges for nature and to mitigate against climate change – such as coastal wetlands to combat flood risks. However, with such demand on land, it will need to provide multiple benefits to people and nature.

The Environment Agency has a leading role to play in restoring or recreating new wildlife-rich habitat in England. Recent projects include peat restoration at Great Fen, Cambridgeshire, which will save 325,000 tonnes of CO2 from being released each year while restoring habitats for threatened fenland species and protecting surrounding towns, villages and farmland from the risk of flooding after heavy rainfall.

The report identifies such nature-based solutions as a crucial tool in

restoring nature and achieving multiple other benefits. By working with nature, including tree planting, peat restoration, species reintroductions and natural flood management, it suggests there are opportunities to restore biodiversity, whilst providing other benefits such as carbon sequestration, flood protection and clean and plentiful water.

The report also says action will also be required to address the levels of consumption in wealthy countries, which contribute to the loss of biodiversity, and that sustained effort will be required from many people and organisations at forums like the COP 15 meeting of the UN Convention on Biological Diversity to tackle the effects of global consumption, production and supply chains.

[Strengthened controls to protect the public from medically unfit gun holders](#)

Strengthened controls for licensed gun owners will be in place from this week to better protect the public from those who are medically unfit to own a firearm.

A new digital marker is being rolled out across GP surgeries in England which, once applied to a patient's record, will flag that they have a firearms licence and automatically alert doctors if there has been a relevant change in their medical situation.

This could include a change in their mental health, diagnosis of a neurological condition or evidence of substance abuse.

The new system will mean GPs can alert the relevant police force, who can then ensure licensed gun holders who may no longer be fit to own a firearm are swiftly identified, their licence reviewed and, if deemed appropriate, their firearm seized.

Minister for Crime, Policing and Probation, Kit Malthouse said:

We have some of the strictest gun control laws in the world and we will not hesitate to bring in even stronger processes where we see the need for them.

The imminent inquest into the tragic shootings in Sussex and impending first anniversary of the horrific shootings in Plymouth are a stark reminder of how much we owe it to the public to take

these matters seriously.

We are focused on making our streets safer and it is absolutely right that the police be told about changes in the medical circumstances of anyone licensed to own a gun. This move is yet another example of us giving the police the tools they require to protect the public.

The digital marker system bolsters recent statutory guidance, brought into force last November, that set out that the police cannot grant a firearms licence until they have reviewed information from a suitably qualified doctor regarding the applicant's medical history.

The digital marker will streamline the way doctors can keep track of patients who have applied for, or been granted, a firearms certificate – which was previously something done manually. The marker has been developed by NHS Digital and is being rolled out in GP practices across England, with 98% of practices able to access it from this week.

Minister for Patient Safety and Primary Care, Maria Caulfield, said:

These new measures make it easier for GPs to identify any concerning medical issues with gun holders or applicants, before passing this vital information on to relevant police forces, helping ensure public safety.

The new system was agreed following extensive cooperation with the British Medical Association (BMA) and comes after they agreed a Memorandum of Understanding in July 2019 with the Home Office and the National Police Chiefs Council about the role of doctors in the firearms licensing system.

NHS Digital CEO, Simon Bolton, said:

The addition of this marker to GP records is a prime example of how a digitally enabled healthcare service benefits patients and the public.

This new system will also reduce the administrative burden for GPs, giving them more time to deliver care.

Dr Peter Holden, BMA lead for firearms licensing policy and a GP in Matlock, Derbyshire, said:

As advocates for their patients and communities, family doctors

support the need for scrutiny and proper safeguards when it comes to owning a weapon that can be used with lethal outcomes.

For decades now, the BMA has been pushing for an active flagging system within patients' records that is robust, clear and standardised across the country, and the new digital marker is a positive step in the right direction of improving the contribution GPs make to the licensing process.

However, the public should be under no illusion that this will be an overnight solution. This new scheme will apply only to new applicants or people renewing their licences, so it will take up to five years before all licensed gun owners are included within this framework.

Of course, when there is a diagnosis of concern, GPs will continue to use all of the information in front of them and where there is a danger to the wider public or the patient themselves, they will alert authorities.

The introduction of the marker though must not imply that the buck for public safety stops with the GP; as the police have acknowledged, they themselves are ultimately responsible for firearms licensing.

But as this new marker is rolled out, we encourage GPs to build on existing relationships with local forces to help further protect public safety.